

Year of Faith
Liturgical Minute No. 36
Amen

We pray “AMEN” repeatedly at church and in our private prayers. But what does this word mean? What is its significance?

“Amen” is a word derived from a solemn Hebrew word describing something that is “firm,” “true,” or “reliable.” Jesus began some of his teachings by saying, “Amen, Amen, I say to you.” Only Jesus used this phrase – using this double “amen” to affirm and bring attention to the trustworthiness and extra solemn nature of what he was about to say.

The root word for “amen” is actually, “to believe.” When used at the end of a prayer, “amen” has the meaning “let it be so,” “so be it,” or “yes, indeed,” signifying agreement with the prayer that has been said.

Old Testament book of Nehemiah, Chapter 5, Verse 13, also recognizes a deeper meaning to this term. Therein, Nehemiah tells us that when the assembly answered, “Amen,” and praised the Lord, they then “did as they had promised.” So, saying the word “Amen” not only implies agreement, but also implies a future promise of action. That is, the word “amen” not only declares our commitment to what has been said, it also proclaims our sense of responsibility to follow through by taking the implied appropriate course of action, whatever it might be.

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Major Source: Father James M. Sullivan, O.P., Magnificat Year of Faith Companion.